



REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Downtown Master Plan
RFQ-OED #2

An Urban Planning, Design, and
Economic Development Plan for the
City of Asheville, North Carolina

Date Issued:

October 4, 2007

Statement of Qualifications Due:

November 8, 2007

A Project For:

City of Asheville

Office of Economic Development
29 Haywood Street
Asheville North Carolina 28801

Steered by:

Asheville Downtown Commission
Pat Whalen, Chairman

Response and Inquires to:

Urban Planner Stephanie Monson
smonson@ashevillenc.gov
(828) 232-4502

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Reference Exhibits

Reference Exhibits and the contents of this RFQ may be found under the Projects and Initiatives section (choose Downtown Master Plan RFQ) on the City of Asheville website at: www.ashevillenc.gov

Part One

1. Overview

The City of Asheville (herein after referred to as *the City*) seeks the services of a qualified consultant team with considerable ability in the areas of citizen involvement/participation, visioning, planning, and sustainable community design, to develop a new master plan for Downtown Asheville. The selected firm will be responsible for providing specific professional services to support the formulation of a proposed *Downtown Master Plan for Asheville, North Carolina* (hereinafter referred to as *The Plan*).

This plan is expected to be an extensive and forthright assessment of the potential and liabilities of development in Asheville's near future. *The Plan* will include: a written implementation strategy; a phasing plan with associated public infrastructure costs; graphic illustrations; a regulating plan; policy recommendations; and a matrix outlining the plan implementation components.

The intention of this plan is to synthesize current community goals with previous planning efforts and policies; provide a clear guide and predictable framework that is useful for both developers and citizens; and serve as a powerful graphic tool for visualizing preferred downtown development. The plan should be detailed enough to address downtown Asheville's immediate needs and dynamic enough to serve as a guide for the foreseeable future. The successful applicants to this Request for Qualifications will exhibit visionary and integrated thinking in solving complex community needs.

2. Project Purpose

Beginning where the City's existing Center City Plan (2002) left off, *The Plan* shall be a unified development document that guides 5-20 years of sustainable growth, continuing Asheville on its path towards being the premier small city in the nation for urban livability. We already have an eclectic mix of:

- ❑ historically preserved buildings.
- ❑ local retail and restaurants.
- ❑ pedestrian streetscapes and two restored urban squares.
- ❑ many community events that operate throughout the year.
- ❑ a substantial, growing, and diverse downtown housing market.

We don't need "cookie cutter" solutions; we need innovative and artisan-like attention to our city. We expect this project to be a great opportunity for you, for all the reasons why you are passionate about your work.

3. Study Area Characteristics & Background

The principle focus of the project will be the Central Business District (see attachment B) within which there is a diverse arrangement of land uses. Gateways, corridors, and peripheral neighborhoods should inform the plan.

The majority of the historic core has already experienced renovation of existing building stock. The most pressing need for downtown is a predictable method of developing compatible in-fill development that complements these structures.

Here's some of what people have said about Asheville since 2000:

- #8 "Best Places to Live" - MSN/Sperlings Best Places,
- Top 25 Best Places to do Business - Forbes
- "Top 20 Best Places to Retire in the World" - Barron's,
- #8 of the Top 25 Arts Destinations – American Style
- Top 10 Great Adventure Towns - National Geographic
- 2nd Best Collection of Art Deco Architecture in the Southeast. - Smithsonian
- Top 8 Great Walking Towns - Where to Retire Magazine
- Top 10 towns for a second-home investment - MSN- Money
- Happiest City in the United States – Self Magaine
- Top 15 Most Desirable Places to Live - Harris Poll list
- "Top 10 Literary Destinations" - USA Today
- #1 Best Outdoor Towns – Outside Magazine
- #1 Urban Haven in the World – Wallpaper Magazine
- Top Five Best Mountain Biking Towns – Bike Magazine
- Top 10 Healthiest Places to Live – Kiplinger's
- Top 10 Paddling Towns – Canoe and Kayak Magazine
- America's Best Vegetarian-Friendly Small City – PETA
- Top 8 Places to Buy Real Estate- 8/06 – MSNBC
- Top 12 Travel Destinations in the World – Frommer's 11/06
- Best Collection of late 19th- early 20th-century Urban Architecture in NC. –
National Parks Service
- #7 Smartest Places to Live - Kiplinger's

4. Related Studies and Programs Existing, Currently Underway or Proposed

The City of Asheville needs a comprehensive downtown development plan, replete with innovative tools and policies, which is responsive to current development trends and matches the level of sophistication and interest in the community. There are a many existing plans, studies and programs that you will need to consider in your work on *The Plan*.

As mentioned at the bottom of the Table of Contents, links to many of these documents can be found in the Downtown Master Plan RFQ section under

Projects and Initiatives on the City's website. The section will be called Reference Documents; when new documents or links are added it will be noted by a change in the update date on the page.

5. Objectives/Desired Planning Outcomes

The Plan should:

1. Provide a comprehensive guide for Downtown development that fosters sustainable economic growth. Promote sustainable development measures that will utilize green, aesthetically-pleasing design standards and land-use combinations. Incorporate policies and initiatives from the City Council Smart Growth Initiative, New Urbanism, USGBC LEED-Neighborhood Design, tools, and other best-practices.
2. Evaluate public infrastructure (buildings, parks, public amenities, street network, streetscapes, water, sewer, telecom, stormwater, trash collection/recycling, etc.) to determine if additional public infrastructure is needed to support new or expanded economic development.
3. Strengthen the linkages and reinforce gateways and corridors between the surrounding neighborhoods and Downtown; and reinforce corridors related to the downtown.
4. Provide recommendations for sustainable transportation methods (public and private) within the context of existing patterns of transportation and accommodating future growth.
5. Develop a Form Based Code that provides a flexible development process to achieve high quality development. Deliver a streamlined regulatory document with a clear and concise graphic design. Design an implementation strategy that will develop policy tools that can be used by staff and the Administration to insure that development results in the desired physical form and responds to social needs, for example affordable/workforce housing and open space.
6. Coordinate with all relevant plans and initiatives in process that affect the CBD (see items in Section 4).
7. Provide policy recommendations that help realize and promote a healthy mix of land uses within the Downtown core, including the need for additional open space and affordable/workforce housing, both local and world class businesses, live/work spaces, etc.
8. Use existing commissions/committees as a vehicle for informing the public and interested stakeholders about the plan and getting them

involved in the planning process and implementation phase; involve all interested parties through a charrette method.

The Plan shall encompass the following elements:

- Citizen involvement
- Community vision
- Downtown development and redevelopment
- Economic development
- Housing
- Land use planning
- Open spaces, scenic and historic areas, and natural resources
- Public facilities and services
- Urban design

To address the above elements, it is envisioned that the final scope of work will include:

- Background research, data collection and mapping. The staff of the City of Asheville Planning Department will provide all existing maps and current GIS data.
- Community input
- Overall market and land use understanding
- Downtown-specific market and land use understanding
- Consideration of demographic and development trends
- Capital improvement recommendations
- Implementation plan and timeline
- Compatibility and relation to other projects and plans affecting the city overall and the downtown area for example the parking study and parks master plan process underway.
- A regulating plan

6. Consultant Responsibilities

- Review existing plans, assessments and current revitalization efforts and evaluate appropriateness and applicability.
- Work with the Master Plan Advisory Committee throughout the project to refine the work program and establish a shared vision.
- Organize a series of charettes/public meetings with key stakeholders and the community to obtain ideas suggestions, and create a vision for the city.

- Develop a matrix to show future development components, associated costs and the responsibilities of different agencies for implementation of the plan.
- Prepare conceptual development plans and graphics for the study area, and specific development plans and graphics for key nodes and sites.
- We expect the final product to include an ARCGIS map, preferably one that can be integrated into a 3D model or analysis application currently being developed by the City.

7. City Responsibilities

- Provide Geographic Information System (GIS) data with various mapping themes and information.
- Provide meeting locations and charrette space, and assist in scheduling meetings.
- Provide all relevant documents, reports, list of property owners, businesses, and contact names if known

Part Two

8. Selection Process Overview

This process begins with the receipt of statements of qualification as a response to the RFQ outlined herein. Following review of the submissions, a short-list of consultant teams will be created and ranked by the Asheville Downtown Master Plan Advisory Committee (see next section).

City staff will initiate an interview and negotiations (e.g. regarding scope of work and fee) with the top ranked consultant team. If the City and the top ranked consultant team fail to create an agreement or memorandum of understanding, the City will initiate negotiations with the next highest ranked

9. Asheville Downtown Master Plan Advisory Committee

A Plan Advisory Committee will be established to review proposals, select finalists, and work with the selected team on the Plan. The individuals serving on this committee will consist of members of City staff and members of the Downtown Commission.

10. Terms and Conditions of the RFQ

Communications

It is extremely important all potential respondents are given clear and consistent information. Therefore, all respondents are required to submit any questions related to this project or selection process in writing so answers can be distributed to all registered respondents. Questions about the interpretation of specifications or the RFQ process should be directed in writing to Stephanie Monson, City of Asheville, at smonson@ashevillenc.gov

The City prohibits respondent communication to or with any department, bureau or employee during the submission process. In addition, no communications may be initiated by a respondent to any City Official or persons involved in evaluating or considering the statement of qualifications prior to the time a decision has been made.

Communication with any parties for any purposes other than those expressly described herein may cause an individual firm, or team to be disqualified immediately from participating.

Questions must be received in ample time before the period set for the receipt of qualifications submittals. No inquiries, if received within ten (10) days of the date set for receipt of qualifications submittals will be given any consideration. Any interpretation will be available to prospective respondents in the form of an addendum to the request for qualifications, which, if issued, will be available no later than five (5) days prior to the date set for receipt of qualifications submissions.

Registration

We strongly encourage those parties wishing to submit qualifications to register with the Office of Economic Development at smonson@ashevillenc.gov or by calling (828) 232 4502.

It is the responsibility of all parties planning to submit qualifications to contact the Asheville Office of Economic Development prior to submitting qualifications to ascertain if any addenda have been issued, to obtain all such addenda, and to return executed addenda with the proposal.

Minority Business Plan

The City of Asheville has adopted a Minority Business Plan to encourage participation by minority businesses in the award of contracts. Participants are hereby notified that this RFQ and subsequent RFP process are subject to the provisions of that Plan.

Questions regarding the Minority Business Plan may be directed to Brenda Mills, Coordinator at the Minority Business Program, 29 Haywood Street, Asheville, NC 28801 or by phone at (828) 232-4566 or bmills@ashevillenc.gov. Respondents can access certified minority firms for subcontracting purposes online at <http://www.ips.state.nc.us/ips/vendor/srchven.asp>.

It is the policy of the City to (1) provide minorities an equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of its contracting and procurement programs and (2) prohibit any and all discrimination against persons or businesses in pursuit of these opportunities.

Other Terms

The City of Asheville reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Statement(s) of Qualifications, with or without cause. All decisions related to this solicitation by the Selection Committee and City Council will be final.

The City reserves the right to request clarification of information submitted and to request additional information of one or more respondents.

Costs for preparing the Statement of Qualification in response to this request are solely the responsibility of the respondent.

It will be necessary for responding parties to comply fully with the general terms and conditions outlined in this document if they are to be considered. A letter attesting the respondent has read and understands all procedures is a part of the initial submission requirements (Use Attachment A).

11. Anticipated Schedule of Events

The city reserves the right to amend dates. While the timeline may be subject to change, all participating parties will be notified

November 8th – RFQ deadline

November 9th – Distribute submittals to Plan Advisory Committee

November 30th – RFQ shortlist produced

First two weeks of December - Conduct interviews with finalist(s)

Last two weeks of December – Selection of the Plan consultant

1st week of January – Begin work plan
February 2008 – Community charrette and input process
March 2008 – Preliminary presentation and concept plan
April 2008 – Draft plan to the Downtown Commission
May 2008 – Final presentation to Downtown Commission
June 2008 – Presentation to Asheville City Council

12. Selection Criteria

Consultant proposals will be evaluated by the Plan Advisory Committee using the following criteria as a measure of the applicant's ability to successfully complete the project scope of work.

- Qualifications and previous related work of key personnel and or subcontractors
- Depth of relevant technical experience of the consultant team with efforts of this type.
- The level of utilization of innovative approaches and solutions in the consultant team's past projects.
- Depth of interdisciplinary skills related to urban design, land use planning, and analysis.
- Level of understanding of The Plan's project goals, downtown Asheville's issues and local needs.
- Level of experience with municipalities of similar size, government structure, complexity and issues.
- The demonstrated ability to organize and lead effective, productive public meetings and in-house project meetings.
- Ability to meet time frame required to complete the plan and phasing of deliverables.
- Quality of sample materials and qualifications package submitted.

13. Final Deliverables

The following is a list of projected deliverables for the final product of the Plan. This list is subject to change and will be finalized with the consultant team as part of the final contract.

- Twenty-three hard copies of the Plan.

- A digital copy in PDF
- A citizen summary format of the plan capable of simple reproduction, the format of which is negotiable but should emphasize the visualization of The Plan. The consultant team will be encouraged to be innovative when negotiating this format with the Plan Advisory Committee.
- All deliverables should be compatible with Windows operating systems, Microsoft Office, ArcMap and other formats as determined during the project work program. It is desired that any three dimensional modeling of the plan be compatible with SketchUp format.
- All deliverables should be presented to the City of Asheville in both hard copy and electronic formats whenever possible.
- Rights to all data, work products, etc. revert to the City of Asheville upon completion of contract.
- Professional assistance initiated at the start of the project extending through the adoption of the Plan by the City Council.
- The Plan format to be accessible in its entirety via the Internet.

14. Submittal Requirements and Procedures

Submittals must be received by the City of Asheville's Economic Development Office no later than 4:00 P.M. EST, Thursday, November 8, 2007.

In order to be considered a valid submittal, each Statement of Qualifications must provide the minimum following requirements by section in the order listed below, with the entire proposal not to exceed 15 pages:

Cover Page

Display consultant team name and contact(s), display the title: Statement of Qualifications, Downtown Asheville Master Plan.

Section 1- Attachment A

The attachment A provided in this RFQ must be signed by an officer of your company who can be held accountable for all representations.

Section 2- Statement of Understanding

A statement describing the applicant's understanding of the objectives defined for the proposed Plan and the special skills and innovative thinking that the team would bring to the table.

Section 3 - Proposed Project Team Members

Submit a written description of the applicant's organizational composition, disciplines and the primary role of each firm or individual on the team. Also, include an organization chart. The information must clearly indicate the applicant's designated team leader for this project and the responsible party in each firm who will be providing the required professional experience.

Section 4- Individual Experience

Provide background of the key members of each firm in the team and their specific participation in previous projects that would directly relate to this project.

Section 5 - Specific Project Experience

Provide information on similar or relevant projects (e.g. a downtown master plan) that the applicant has executed. Include graphic representation.

Note: please identify projects completed within budget and schedule.

Section 6 - Project Approach

Describe the applicant's proposed approach to and philosophy regarding elements of the project, specifically addressing an item or items addressed in this RFQ. *(Hint: The consultant is expected to understand and acknowledge the uniqueness of Asheville's downtown in their approach)*

Section 7 - Additional Information

Provide other information you feel is relevant to indicate the applicant's abilities to successfully complete a project of this nature.

Section 8- List of References

Provide a minimum of 3 client references with which the applicant has provided similar planning/design services within the last five years. Reference shall include name and telephone number of the contact person. The applicant may include additional references from earlier work if the applicant feels it is pertinent and better defines the team's capacity. Each listed reference shall include a description of the services provided to client and specific role.

Fifteen (15) copies of the application package as well as one complete copy of the submittal in portable document format (PDF) on a compact disk must be submitted no later than the above-mentioned deadline. (The PDF file should include all maps, plats, renditions, photographs, or other graphics or materials that were included in the bound copies.).

Submittals should be mailed or delivered to the attention of:

Ms Stephanie Monson,
Urban Planner for Economic Development,
City of Asheville
Office of Economic Development
29 Haywood Street
Asheville, North Carolina 28801
Phone (828)-232-4502
FAX: (828)-232-4506
E-mail smonson@ashevillenc.gov

Attachment A:

Understanding of RFQ Procedures, Terms and Conditions

(To be returned with qualifications submission)

Invitation to Submit Qualifications

City of Asheville, North Carolina

RFQ # OED-2

I acknowledge I have read and understand all procedures and requirements of the above referenced RFQ and have complied fully with the general terms and conditions outlined in the RFQ.

Development Team: _____

Representative's Signature: _____

Representative's Printed Name: _____

Date: _____

Attachment B **Map**

